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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5467
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0244
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0283
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0435
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0247
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0196

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SUBJECT: CHINESE FM TO STOP BRIEFLY IN MAURITANIA

Classified By: Amb. Joseph LeBaron, Reasons 1.4 (b),(d)

¶1. (U) The Peoples Daily Online, China's official online news source, has reported that Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing will make a "technical stopover" in Mauritania as part of his visit to six Latin America and Middle East countries between May 17 and 25.

¶2. (U) According to local sources, the May 20 visit will last only a few hours, and will include meetings with Colonel Fal and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Ould Sid'Ahmed. Topics will include the exploration and sale of oil (China has purchased all three shipments of Mauritania's crude oil since March 20, totaling 2.9 million barrels) and development projects such as the new International Airport (currently being built by the Chinese).

¶3. (C) Embassy Comment: The visit, which is one of several recent stops by high-ranking Chinese officials, is seen as part of an ongoing effort by Beijing to foster friendly (and profitable) relations with Mauritania. China currently buys a significant amount of Mauritania's iron exports, and is poised to follow suit with oil. End Comment.
LeBaron